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Dear Minister

Planning Apprenticeships

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 26,000 spatial planners. RTPI NI represents the RTPI in Northern Ireland, with nearly 800 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and well-being of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

We work with employers to continue to promote a diverse and inclusive profession. We want to demonstrate that a career in planning is open for all to join. The single most influential way to diversify the profession is through the education system. We need to broaden the talent coming into the profession. For us to be an effective and sustainable profession, we must be genuinely representative of the society in which we work.

The traditional route to becoming a Chartered Town Planner is via university. However we know that this route can be prohibitive to some in society. In England we launched a Degree level Chartered Town Planning Apprenticeship in 2019, which includes an RTPI accredited qualification and professional membership on completion. We currently have over 290 apprentices on the programme.

Our apprentices in England in 2020 are comprised:

- 51% female.
- 16% under 25 in age.
- 14% of our apprentices have either South Asian, West Asian, Black Caribbean, Black African or mixed heritage.
- A separate survey suggests that 51% of our apprentices have a non-degree family background.
- Around half of the apprentices are based in the public sector.

The RTPI's ambition is to have a profession which is representative of communities. We believe in the importance of broadening the diversity of the talent pipeline into the planning


profession afforded through apprenticeships, and the opportunities it offers to bring people in from under-represented groups.

We also have work which is nearing conclusion, on the development of the Level 4 Town Planning Assistant Apprenticeship, which may also offer opportunities in Northern Ireland.

A strong planning service in Northern Ireland delivered through the Department for Infrastructure and the 11 Councils and supported by private sector planning consultancies is essential for the future sustainable growth across the Province.

The RTPI would welcome the opportunity to discuss the development of the Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship qualification in Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Roisin Willmott OBE FRTPi
Director

c.c. Nichola Mallon, Minister for Infrastructure
Angus Kerr, Chief Planner, Department for Infrastructure